

Delta State



Lusinger's Country Store
Toe to Toe with a Dream: Golden Gloves Boxing
Waiting for Yesterday
Way Up North in Mississippi
Marjorie Bates, Artist
The Duster
A Special Place



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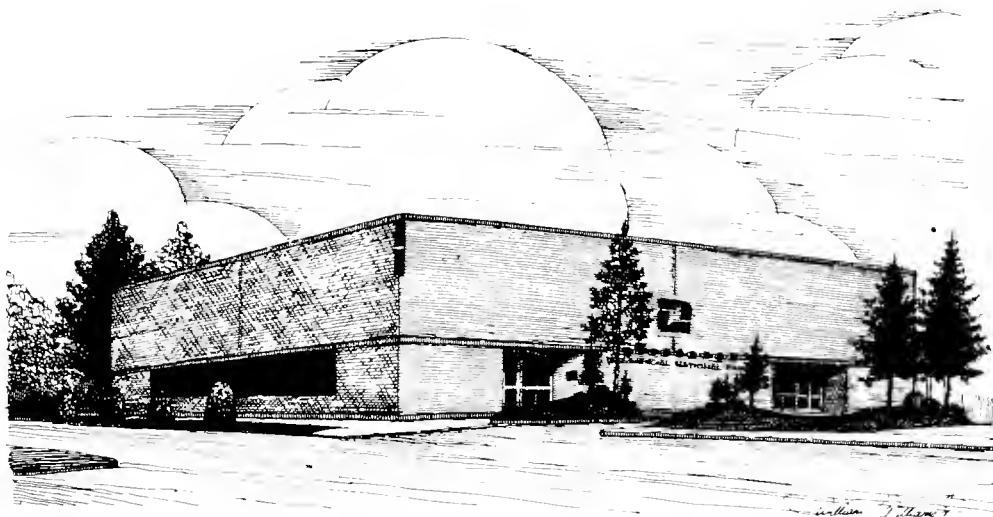
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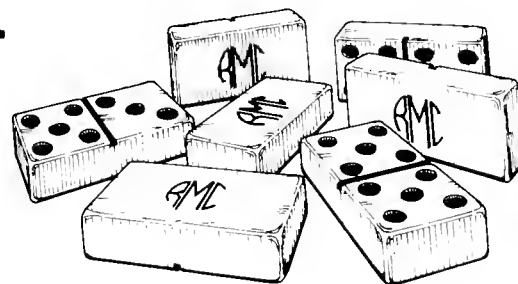
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To the Editor

Thanks so much for accepting "Harley's Comet" for DELTA SCENE. I'm attaching the biography you asked for. Besides DELTA SCENE, I've had stories published in **Old Hickory Review**, **Gone Soft** (published by Salem, Mass. State College) and **The Mid-South Writer**. I am proudest of the fact that a couple of stories made it in DELTA SCENE.

I like writing and if I had a little more discipline, would do a great deal more. I hope this summer to finish a short novel and four stories which I think might work as a single volume. A lot remains to be seen, though. I should add here that DELTA SCENE deserves the thanks of all writers from this area for simply existing, not to mention the quality in every issue. With the limited markets anymore, I think DELTA SCENE keeps a lotus writing with the hope of someday receiving an acceptance letter, as I did. Once again, many thanks.

Speaking of which, the sample copies Susie Ranager gave me were the hit of the Mid-South Writer's Association meeting on January 16th. Every single copy was pounced on, and I made sure each one contained a subscription card and envelope. Hope you'll get some response there.

Jim Grey
Memphis, Tennessee

I lived in Greenville for about a year, and during that time I became fascinated with the Mississippi Delta and its people. A friend sent me a gift subscription of DELTA SCENE for my birthday, and I have really enjoyed the magazine. You have certainly captured the essence of the Delta in your publication.

Susan Riggins
Santa Barbara, California

Your publication keeps getting better and better! The stories and articles are first rate, and the artwork is second to none. DELTA SCENE is, in my opinion, the best such magazine available in the state. Keep up the good work!

John R. Richter
Jackson, MS

DELTA SCENE is really a nice magazine. But as a native Deltan I have a complaint. You need to start showing how the Delta really is, warts and all, and stop painting such rosy pictures. You must admit it's not the most attractive place in the world, and it really has some serious problems — poverty, unemployment, etc. Why not do some articles on these aspects of the Delta? Maybe you can help make things better there.

Marianne Savoy
Monroe, La.

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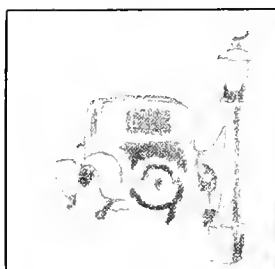
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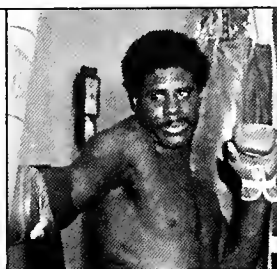
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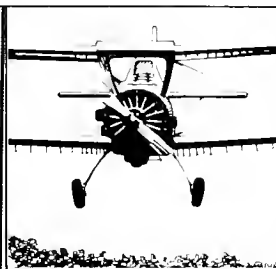
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Cover Photo: Photographer James Salley captures on film Bolivar County's Bogue Phalia River on a sunny afternoon.

MARCH 1981

March

Traditional and contemporary interpretations of the Chinese style of brushwork painting: Watercolors from Old Bergen Art Guild, Carnegie Public Library, 114 Delta Avenue, Clarksdale, MS.

March

"Religious Architecture in Mississippi" exhibit from State Historical Museum at Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, MS.

March 20-April 10

Faculty Exhibiton, Wright Art Center, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. Opening - Friday, March 20, 5-7 p.m.

March 20-21

Vicksburg Run Through History, Run Clinic at the Ramada Inn on the 20th, 10,000 meter run at 9:00 a.m., the 21st. Sponsored by the Ramada Inn, Vicksburg, and Miss. Track Association. Entry Fee. Vicksburg, MS.

March 21-April 5

Vicksburg Pilgrimage, Tours in morning and afternoon include 5 homes each. Candlelight tours, 2 homes. Projected free transportation for tours, Vicksburg, MS.

March 21

Vo Tech (Greenville Vocational Training Center Exhibits & Displays), Greenville Mall, Highway 1 South, Greenville, MS.

March 21

People's Choice Art Show, includes works of local adult artists, sponsored by the Vicksburg Art Association, Constitutional Firehouse Gallery, Main Street, Vicksburg, MS.

March 26

Salute to Pilgrimage, Community Chorus and Miss America 1980, Cheryl Prewitt, Vicksburg Auditorium, admission charged, Vicksburg, MS, 8:00 p.m.

March 26

"Shigemi Matsumoto", Japanese Soprano, concert held in Greenville High School by membership only, Greenville Music Assn., Greenville, MS, 8:00 p.m.

March 26-28

Steve Gipson (cartoonist), satire as he draws, program will appeal to adults and drawing will appeal to adults and children, (He will also give performances at area high schools), Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

March 27

GED — General Education Development Test, President's Conference Room, Mississippi Valley State University, Itta Bena, MS, 8:00 a.m.

March 28

ACT — American College Test, Social Science Auditorium, Mississippi Valley State University, Itta Bena, MS, 8:00 a.m.

APRIL 1981

April 1-4

"Death Trap" by Ira Levin, University Theatre Production, the University of Mississippi, Fulton Chapel, Oxford, MS, 8:00 p.m.

April 1-12

Arts Festival, Greenwood, MS.

April 2

Lunch with Books at Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, MS, Noon.

April 4, 11

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

April 4

Easter Bunny arrives during fashion show by Delta Models, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

April 5-May 15

Cottonlandia Collection Competition 1981, a competitive painting exhibition of work by MS Artists. Gallery opening with reception for the artists April 5th, 6:00 p.m.

April 7

Annual Singers Spring Concert, Fine Arts Auditorium, Northwest Mississippi Junior College, 7:30 p.m.

April 7

Southern Opera Theater, this traveling company presents fine music for the school children of Greenville, Greenville, MS.

April 8

Blood Pressure Testing, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

April 9

Annual MENC Sponsored Mid-South Youth Talent Contest, \$1.00 admission, Fine Arts Building, Northwest Mississippi Junior College, Senatobia, MS, 7:30 p.m.

EVENTS

April 11

Pinewood Derby by Boy Scouts,
Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

April 11

Literary Seminar, Bern Keating,
W.M. Whittington Jr. Playhouse,
Greenwood, MS.

April 11-12

Springtime at Floewood River
Plantation State Park,
entertainment for the entire family,
Greenwood, MS.

April 18-May 3

Graduate Exhibition, Wright Art
Center, Delta State University,
Cleveland, MS. Opening - Sunday,
April 18.

April 22-26

Mississippi Art Colony Painting
Workshop, Camp Henry S. Jacobs,
Utica, Mississippi.

April 22-24

"The Robber Bridegroom," by
Eudora Welty, presented by the
music and theatre departments of
Northwest Mississippi Junior
College, Senatobia, Mississippi,
Fine Arts Building, 7:30 p.m.

April 25

Vicksburg Flea Market, Old Court
House lawn, all day. Crafts of local
and surrounding area for sale,
Vicksburg, MS.

April 25

Industrial Fair, area industries
display products, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

April 29-May 2

Bill Crawford Antique Show,
Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

MAY 1981**May**

Old Bergen Art Guild Exhibit,
watercolors, drawings and prints by
30 Vermont artists at Carnegie
Public Library, 114 Delta Avenue,
Clarksdale, MS.

May 2-3

Jamboree at the National Guard
Armory presented by the
Mainstream CB Club, activities will
include bands, games and door
prizes, Greenville, MS.

May 4-8

Oldest Mother's Contest, oldest
mother receives gift from
merchants, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS, (Monday-Friday
nights 8:00)

May 6-9

"Dial M for Murder," directed by
Frank Ciolino, presented by
Delta Center Stage, Airbase Chapel,
Greenville, MS, 8:00 p.m.

May 7

Slide presentation of Coahoma
County historical photographs at
Carnegie Public Library, 114 Delta
Avenue, Clarksdale, MS, Noon.

May 9

Community Fair, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

May 13-23

"Side By Side by Sondheim," the hit
musical revue to the music by the
incomparable Stephen Sondheim
featuring the New Stage Musical
Company, playing at the New Stage
Theatre, Jackson, MS.

May 13

Blood Pressure Testing, by the Delta
Medical Center, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

May 16

Armed Forces Day, Armed Forces
Display, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

May 23

Community Fair Days, civic
organizations, schools, churches
sell baked goods and crafts,
Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

May 29-30

Sailboat Show, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

May 31-June 21

"Welty," an exhibition of
photographs by Eudora Welty at
Cottonlandia Museum. Gallery
opening on May 31. Free admission
and refreshments from 2-5 p.m.

JUNE 1981**June 1-6**

Library Show (Washington County
Library Show), Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

June 8-13

Law Enforcement Week, Greenville
Police Department exhibits,
Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

June 10

Blood Pressure Testing by Delta
Medical Center, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

June 18-20

Car Show, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

June 19

Sailboat Show, Greenville Mall,
Greenville, MS.

June 27

Mississippi Delta Kennel Club Dog
Show, Greenville Mall, Greenville,
MS.

June 28-August 14

"Rock and Fossil Show" at
Cottonlandia. Gallery opening May
31. Free admission and
refreshments. From 2-5 p.m.

Lusinger's Country Store

by David Malatesta

Editor's note: There is no such establishment as Lusinger's Store. But the descriptions of a country store which follow are accurate, based on the author's experience of visiting such stores throughout the Mississippi Delta.

I recently had the unique experience of visiting a country store which has been closed since the end of World War II. What makes this country store unique is the fact that all the fixtures and contents remain intact, just as they were in 1945 when the business closed. Lusinger's Country Store, located a few miles east of Shelby, was active during and after the depression.

As I approached the little establishment situated on the corner of two intersecting gravel roads, I noticed a big tin sign tacked on the wall which read, "Pepsi-Cola 5¢." Well shaded by a huge oak tree, the store was a tangible monument to the past. The open front porch had a single wooden door in the middle and one small window on each side. The windows were ornamented with six protective iron bars, three vertical ones and three horizontal ones. Covered with cypress shingles, the steep roof was green with moss. The unpainted exterior walls were faded grey with age. No neighboring house existed; a large field of cotton was the only object seen. Across the gravel road from the store was a small cemetery, in which perhaps rested some former customers. A tall, round glass-topped gasoline pump was near the corner of the porch. It was the kind one has to pump manually to get the gas to the top of the glass tank and then let it drain down the

hose into the vehicle. Underneath the porch, I spotted an old grapple soda pop bottle and some brown snuff jars.

As I opened the creaky door and stepped inside the little shot-gun store, it was like taking a journey back in time. The store measured about twelve feet wide and twenty feet long. Shelves on each side reached from the floor to the ceiling. The walls and ceiling were made of narrow beaded boards painted white. The only lighting fixtures were two light bulbs hanging by a braided cord from the ceiling. One bulb was at the back of the building; the other, nearer the front. From the middle of the ceiling hung a wide fan with six long wooden blades. A pull string was attached to the fan with a sign on the end of it that read, "Snap Back With Stanback." The rough hardwood floor had revealing cracks between the boards. The floor ached for a good mopping with kerosene to preserve the wood.

A heavy ten-foot oak counter was the main focal point of the store. A paper rack was fastened on one end of the counter. Brown wrapping paper was used because there were no paper bags. After I wiped some dust off the top of the counter, it revealed a slick, worn, shiny finish. The counter top was made of wood because there was no such thing as formica then. Most people would assume that many a buffalo nickel and silver dollar had slid across that old counter. That, however, would be a false assumption because during this time most business done in the Delta, especially during the depression, was on credit.

Under the counter, I found a day journal or charge book. No country store was complete without one. One entry that caught my eye was

for a customer named T.L. Johnson. On June 15, 1936, T.L. charged the following: one gallon of coal oil, 11¢; one box of snuff, 5¢; one pound of coffee, 30¢; and one plug of tobacco, 10¢. If the storeowner also owned a farm, as many of them did, T.L. may have swapped out his debt in exchange for one day's work. He also might have traded out his debt in a commodity, such as pecans.

A manual-type cash register was on the counter. The keys would register up to five dollars. The five-cent key on the machine was almost rubbed out because of overuse. Being knowledgeable about antiques, I knew that the first two digits of the serial number would reveal the date that the cash register was manufactured. The first two numbers were two and nine; therefore, the cash register was made in 1929.

Positioned next to the front door was a coal oil pump. Coal oil is the common name referring to kerosene. The coal oil pump was a sixty-gallon metal container with a manual hand pump on it to draw out the coal oil. The operator had to revolve the handle clockwise, then turn it counter-clockwise to release the coal oil. This was a valuable fuel because very few people living in the country had electricity; consequently, they depended upon the coal oil for light and sometimes heat.

The antiquated inventory in the store was mostly obsolete. Cork-topped bottles contained patent medicines such as Carter's Liver Pills and Syrup of Pepsin, Quinine capsules, camphor, Black Draught, and Octagon Soap lined the dusty shelves. Harnesses, plow handles, washboards, and monkey wrenches were on the floor underneath the shelves. Cotton

scales and heavy iron pees, the name of the weight that goes with the scale, were hanging on the walls along with mule collars and hames. Two large sacks of coal were leaning against the wall waiting for someone to cast them into the pot-bellied stove centered in the middle of the floor. The variety of merchandise found in this country store was astounding. This "non-self-service" store had everything from bedsprings for newly-wed sharecroppers to hogrings to insert in the nose of a pig to stop him from rooting up the hog pen.

Mounted on a shelf was a tobacco cutter. This was a device used to cut and measure a portion of plug tobacco. The tobacco cutter resembles a modern-day paper cutter, except the base is small and narrow. Sometimes it was used for cutting "Segars." The most popular brand of tobacco was Bull Durham. There was not much of a variety of brands as there are today. The tobacco came in a long plug and, as a result, had to be cut to the specified amount that the customer desired. For example, a customer would say, "Gimme thurty cents wurth ah 'bacca'."

A large cypress stump was used for a butcher's block, unlike the sanitized counters used in supermarkets today. Two long butcher knives and a meat cleaver were the only tools the country storekeeper possessed. A wooden salt bin on the floor was filled with salt, but the salt was caked together because of years of exposure to dampness and heat. Salted pork from this bin was about the only meat sold by the country store

because everyone raised his own meat on the farm. Empty wooden cheese hoops gave evidence to the many pounds of rich yellow cheese sold in the store. The round hoop of cheese was not refrigerated, but rather was placed on the meat block and sliced as the customer asked for it. A common request heard in the country store was, "I want two bits worth of them cheese."

The candy case was the main attraction for children. This showcase was four feet tall, about twenty inches wide and twenty inches long. The thick, heavy beveled-edge glass was encased by brown mahogany wood. The wood was heavily engraved with little beaded designs. Although the glass was dirty and dusty, this showcase was an antique collector's dream. At one time this case was filled with horehound, peppermint, and licorice. The candy came in bulk containers and was sold loose or by the pound. In addition, two straight razors were still in the showcase, along with a silver pocket-watch. Some bottles of Mrs. Stewart's Blueing were on the bottom shelf of the case, although the contents had long ago evaporated.

Never again will there be another institution quite like the country store. Secluded miles away from city life, the country store was the hub of activity in the rural area. The impassable dirt roads made it even more attractive to the country dwellers. Local people spent many hours sitting around the pot-bellied stove discussing the "war" or the big

buck that Jimmy Joe killed over behind Honey Bayou. Friends and neighbors met at the store for all sorts of activities. For example someone might say, "We got a big coon hunt tonight; meet me at the sto'."

A warm and friendly atmosphere prevailed at this establishment, quite unlike the hustle and bustle in today's supermarkets. Some of these country stores started out as plantation commissaries; later they evolved into sole-proprietorships. The independence of the country store blended right in with the independence of rural life. These private enterprises built by industrious men and women reflect the self-sufficient spirit of the Delta people as far back as 1930. They remain true monuments to the past.

David Malatesta is from Shelby, MS, and is attending Delta State University. Besides being a full time student, he also engages in farming.



illustration by Brad Dennis

photo by Rebecca Hood-Adams,
courtesy THE BOLIVAR COMMERCIAL



Toe To Toe With A Dream

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

Floyd Womack has a dream.

Sometimes it steals over him in sleep and the images are clear: a brightly lit ring, an audience cheering from the shadows, and fists — taped and bound in boxing gloves — pummeling him relentlessly. When morning comes, he carries these mental pictures around with him like a talisman.

It's a big dream. But at 6'3" and 205 pounds, Floyd Womack figures he's got what it takes to trim the phantom down to fighting size. After all, he's a heavyweight, a man built to go toe-to-toe with the dream of becoming a professional boxer.

A career in the ring is a long way from the farm beside the Sunflower River where Floyd was born at home. He came up the hard way. As a young child, he moved to Cleveland with his widowed mother. In the eleventh grade he dropped out of school and went to work on a construction crew. "I never did want to quit school," he recalls. "But there were family problems and I needed to be out earning my own way."

Four years ago Floyd went to work as a material handler at Travenol Laboratories, Inc. He married Lenna Rogers, a hometown girl, and together with their two small sons

they moved into a modest home in Cleveland. Floyd played on the company basketball and softball teams, but there was something nagging at the back of his mind.

"I've always been looking for a future," he says. He hopes he's found that future in the boxing ring.

Floyd first tried his hand at boxing when he was 15. It only took two rounds to send him through the ropes and shelve his dream.

"I went down to where the Golden Gloves worked out and they put me in the ring with this guy the first night," he says. "I didn't want to hurt anybody ever in my life."

But just before the second round, someone taunted Floyd from ringside. It made him mad and he threw a hard punch. He opened his opponent's nose from nostril to nostril. Floyd Womack took one look at the bloody face of the other fighter and climbed out of the ring. It was nearly ten years before he went back.

In 1979 the dream nudged him again and Floyd fought a few rounds in local beer joints. He didn't have any training; he just slugged away and hoped the punches landed. Sometimes he took more licks than he gave. One of those blows came at what Floyd calls "the turning point" in his life. He was taking courses at

the plant after work to earn his high school equivalency degree, and his teacher noticed the large knot he sported to class.

"They're going to beat every bit of sense out of your head before you ever get a chance to take the test for your degree," she worried.

The GED teacher found a Delta State student, John Jennings, who took the time to go visit Floyd. "If you're going to fight," Jennings said, "learn to do it right. Go to Golden Gloves where they'll teach you how to handle yourself." About the same time, a fellow employee, John Dyche, began to tell Floyd about a program where he could train and test himself as a boxer. Again, the word was Golden Gloves, and Floyd took the double message from two men named John as a sign.

"I didn't know anything about it," Floyd says. "I just knew I wanted to fight."

In 1980 two major events helped change Floyd's life: he earned his GED degree and he began to train under Murry Roark and Hubert Boykin. "I was so proud to get that high school degree," Floyd says. "I don't like to half-do nothing, and I knew if I got that degree, a man could look at me and say at least I tried. It put me around, gave me self-

confidence."

A shy, quiet-spoken man, Floyd took that new assurance into the ring. "The thing I like about boxing is that you don't have no excuses," he says. "It's just a two-man thing. And it's a clean sport, not like wrestling. When I started fighting seriously last year I just wanted to answer the question that I'd always had; I just wanted to know where I stand."

"All my life," continues Womack, "I've believed that if you want something you ought to go out and try your hardest. Then you won't have to spend the rest of your life wondering whether you were good enough."

Boxing now as a Golden Gloves amateur, Floyd hopes to climb the ranks of amateur fighting and turn pro in a year or two. "I think about it all the time," he says. "It's with me every day. I want to win for my family and the club and my friends. The people at work have encouraged me and my coaches have done everything they could for me. Now it's all riding on me."

"You hear about a lot of pros," he dreams. "But not too many of them come from Mississippi. If I can get the chance I want to represent Mississippi. You go somewhere and say you're from Cleveland and folks think Cleveland, Ohio. I'd like them to hear about Cleveland, Mississippi sometime."

"I try to be a smooth, classy fighter," Floyd says. "I try to keep my head and watch to make things go my way. Whatever I can't do with my hands, I just move with my feet."

"I've got long arms and a better chance on the outside." Floyd weaves and bobs to demonstrate the moves. "I have to work on keeping my balance, keep dancing around. And I try to outsmart the man. I've got to look at a man to know how to fight him. And then I plan how to slow him up to do my time."

The road to professional boxing is a long, hard haul, and Floyd Womack works at it every day. "There's so much you've got to give up — no smoking, drinking, being with your wife. There ain't but two of you in the ring, and you use up everything you've got every time you throw a lick. A man's got to lay down everything that weakens him. And you've got to work to keep your mind strong."

Realistically, what are the chances

of a 25-year-old boxer successfully turning pro?

"That's the very age Rocky Marciano was when he first started to train," says trainer Boykin, who's seen many a match in his more than 50 years in the fight game. "Floyd's quick and powerful; he's got as fine a body as any fighter living. He's got patience and reasons things out. Boxing is not just slugging it out. It's a game of skill and protection; you've got to see what you can do without getting hit. You either have it or you don't, and you might as well walk off and leave it if you don't. Floyd's got a good chance."

Murry Roark, president of the Cleveland Athletic Club, agrees that Womack has possibilities. "If he can just improve and make as much progress in the next year as he has in the last, Floyd's got as good a chance as anybody. He's got the ability and we're working with him all the time."

One asset in Womack's favor is his ability to spark crowd enthusiasm. A recent match at the Cleveland Expo Building saw hundreds of fans rise to their feet and chant "Go Floyd!" until the fever pitch of voices seems to kick up the sawdust floor.

"You expect that kind of thing with hometown fights," says Roark. "But



Cleveland heavyweight boxer Floyd Womack works out on the punching bag at the Cleveland Athletic Club gym.

when Floyd fought over in Oxford against an Oxford man, the crowd still cheered for Womack. He attracts people, and he's a real leader to the younger boys. They all crowd around the ring when he fights."

That special relationship with the young boys fighting novice and sub-novice is one of the aspects Floyd cherishes about Golden Gloves. "I hate to miss any time working out with the younger boys. Things go better when we're all together. All the club is as one, and the coaches are willing to help anybody that will help himself. I sure would like to do well and show the younger boys that they got a chance."

A chance — that's what heavyweight Floyd Womack wants for himself, an opportunity to go toe-to-toe with a dream. "If this doesn't work out, then I'll be happy just being a family man," he says. "You know — work hard, live right. If I can't be a pro, then maybe I can encourage others, do what I can to help out the club. Everything depends on what happens in the next year."

His powerful fists — which had jabbed the air as he spoke of an upcoming opponent — now lie still on Floyd Womack's knees as he talks about the support he receives from his wife Lenna, the way two-year-old Floyd Jr. balls up his fists and shadow boxes, and how five-year-old Uganda brags that he's going to fight just like his daddy when he grows up.

"I've got a dream for myself and my family," says Floyd quietly. "I want to make my wife proud of me. I've promised to do for her if I can just get anywhere. I want to pay back my coaches and all the people who've encouraged me."

He balls up his fists again, and the muscles ripple beneath his shirt. "It's all up to me," says the man with the heavyweight dream. "When I'm fighting I think of all the reasons I've got for winning. I try to keep them in mind so I'll do better. After all, there ain't no sense in getting in the ring and getting hit at for nothing."

Rebecca Hood-Adams is head resident of Cain-Tatum/Fugler-Hammett Dormitory at Delta State. Her children's book, *Jonathan Williamson Walker the Third*, will be published this fall by Wears and Associates.

photo by Rebecca Hood-Adams

Golden Gloves Boxing: The Sport Without Losers

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

It's Saturday night and nearly 600 fans have gathered in Cleveland's Expo Building to cheer the 60 boxers who pair off for Golden Gloves competition. A boisterous pack of Cub Scouts elbow each other and guffaw as they wait in line at the concession stand. An older man edges past a row of parents seated ringside and someone whispers, "That's the man who once saw Dempsey fight!" A teenaged girl pushes back the too-big sleeves of the windbreaker she's wearing and nervously chews her fingernail. She turns to watch her boyfriend enter the ring; across the back of the jacket are the words "State Champion."

When a young man climbs between the ropes and listens for the bell that signals the beginning of a Golden Gloves bout, he's the by-product by nearly 25 years of volunteer effort on the part of a handful of devoted Cleveland fight fans. Founded in 1957, the Cleveland Athletic Club was the first AAU sanctioned boxing club in the state. Today, the 35 young fighters from Cleveland compete with amateur boxers representing 45 similar organizations across the state.

But in 1957 when Hubert J. Boykin's 17-year-old son came to him and said he wanted to box, Cleveland didn't have facilities for boxing enthusiasts. Boykin had boxed at the University of Mississippi back in 1932, and armed with books on the subject, he set out to train his son in the backyard. The boy won Mississippi's welterweight championship, graduated from high school, and left home for college. But Boykin still found himself with a backyard full of boys, friends of his son who were interested in lacing up the gloves. Thus, Golden Gloves came to town, with Boykin as one of the original directors of the Cleveland Athletic Club.

Now trainer and head coach, Boykin, 72, praises the program, not only for its sporting aspects, but for the opportunities for social growth it offers young men. "It keeps the boys off the streets," he says. "A lot of them have parents who work and maybe they don't get too much attention at home. It does a kid a lot of good to have the esteem of a grown-up, helps them learn to believe in themselves."

"Win or lose, they're all my champions," says Boykin as he flips through a club scrapbook. Letters fall out. The overseas postmarks witness the affection of former fighters who remember Boykin and pause in their military stints to write their old coach. There are tattered newspaper stories headlining the career of the

Parchman inmate paroled by Governor Ross Barnett into Boykin's custody to fight as a heavyweight. And there are cards from a successful West Coast businessman who transferred his championship spirit into the corporate world.

"I guess I'm still a kid at heart," says Boykin as he enters the gym downtown by the railroad tracks. He joins others from the 15-member Cleveland Athletic Club who supervise the training of youthful boxers every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday night. "Since the beginning back in 1957," says Boykin, "we've never had anybody get seriously hurt. But it takes the proper training."

One of the boxers Boykin trained

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photo by Rebecca Hood-Adams



Former state champion, Jamie Hatcher, 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. James Hatcher of Cleveland, works out on the speed bag.

Waiting for Yesterday

by Larry Conway

photo by Jody Corro



Driving up north on Highway One from Greenville can be quite uneventful. The scenery, ranging from dilapidated old shacks to Lake Bolivar with its choking growth of pond lillies, can seem so repetitive that a traveler might think the highway is just a big treadmill. A closer inspection, however, might reveal something quite special. (Well, it's special in my own opinion at least.)

Beulah, as seen from the highway, is hardly an attraction that causes passersby to screech to a halt and scrutinize the entire town. It appears to be just another of the legions of sleepy Delta towns confined to horse and buggy pace in this highly automated twentieth century. The colors of the houses merge into a collage created out of discord. A deserted cotton gin adds a spirit of solitude and benign neglect to the town. Inside the wild jumble of this profusion of colors is a red brick building that some would say is reminiscent of a cracker box. A weather-beaten shingle hangs above the main door, but it is so faded and defaced by time that its message is almost illegible. It would seem

unlikely that such a building could house Beulah's equivalent of the Black Stone, but it does.

Now don't think that what's lodged inside is of great monetary value; it isn't. Don't for a second believe that the occupant of the red cracker box has the necessary charisma to be a bona fide tourist attraction; it doesn't. What is inside, however, is a symbol of the entire town. It isn't some war relic brought home by a conquering hero or an old plow which stresses the town's dependence on agriculture. As mundane as it may seem, it is just an old fire engine.

The fire engine is an antiquated 1939 model that was recently shoved aside by a younger, faster, and more efficient model. Yet the old timer still commands respect as if it were the patriarch of the family, and in a way it is. The engine has a grill that could embarrass an Edsel and a shaky ladder strapped on top that appears as though it couldn't support a dewdrop. The cluster of gauges near the back have had their facing faded away by the unforgiving years so that to read one would be almost impossible. Well-worn tires offer testament to the many miles of country roads the

engine rolled over at what was then breakneck speed but is now an arthritic hobble. In spite of all the cosmetic deficiencies, the old fire engine has an aura all its own.

The truck is tended to by the last original member of the volunteer fire department, Mr. Fisher, known to everyone else as Fish. Fish is a slight old man who loves old clothes and wears a permanent five o'clock shadow. His brownish skin is deeply lined by the assault of many years and his brown eyes are more suggestive of a beagle than a man. His head is always topped by a pork pie hat that has a match slipped into the hatband for a flash of color. Fish always did look more like a vagrant than a local institution.

If ever there was a pair of kindred spirits, it would have to be Fish and that truck. Both move at their own pace in a world which decrees that swiftness is the desired quantity, and both stubbornly resist any attempt to mend their ways.

Twice a month Fish and the truck take care of each other — he provides the truck with a cleaning and the

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Once a year, Mississippians from all over the Big Apple gather in Central Park for a down-home picnic **Way Up North In Mississippi**

by Brett Shapiro

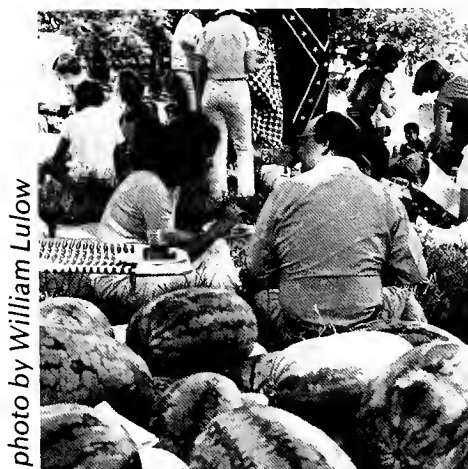


photo by William Lulow

"Southerner — A person born or living in the South; gracious, easy-going, slow talking, friendly folk devoted to front porches, oak trees, cool breezes, peaches and fried chicken." Thus read the T-shirt worn by one of the hundreds of this species gathered in Central Park on June 15, 1980, for the "Way Up North in Mississippi Picnic." Instead of front porches, there were distant terraces of plush Fifth Avenue high rises, the only distinctly northern intrusion with the exception of an occasional disco roller skater or a Macy's bag containing piles of fried chicken and hush puppies. The East Meadow was girdled for the afternoon in an Agricultural instead of a Designer Belt.

The picnic, as emotionally charged as a family reunion, was the inspiration of Vicki Carter, from Tupelo, Mississippi. What started as a small picnic for her friends from Mississippi living in New York blossomed into a city-wide event with an invitation list that included almost 1000 transplanted Mississippians and hinged on the cooperation of New

York City officials for permits, a \$1 million insurance policy, and the other bureaucratic paraphernalia required to temporarily "thump" a chunk of the park well below the Mason-Dixon Line.

Visitors were welcomed at a reception desk by volunteers with smiles as wide as corn on the cob, and by a Dixieland band that strummed out tunes as indigenous to the South as "Hava Nagila" is to a Bar Mitzvah. Identification tags were supplied to distinguish the Yazooians from the Pelahatcheeans and, more important, the Mississippians from the other New Yorkers who happened to be passing through the park, fingers itching for a free piece of Mississippi Mud Cake or a glass of Muscadine wine. As the crowd began to thicken, the screeches of local traffic were drowned out by the shrieks of recognition, as every expatriate eventually discovered a relative, a former teacher, or a friends' cousin's plumber. From underneath a mommoth white sunhat came the yelp, "Wha, don't you remember me? Mah daddy was yaw daddy's dentist,

and yaw daddy was mah daddy's doctor!"

A map of the state had been laid out on the field with red crepe paper, and the major cities were posted in the appropriate spots, with the idea that picnickers could congregate around their respective hometowns and meet up with their neighbors and old friends. However, an overall camaraderie spread throughout, and within an hour the crepe paper border of Mississippi had as many disfigurements as a pecan pie does calories. Of course, there were outsiders. The vent was not barricaded from other Manhattanites by ropes, barbed wire, or attitude. Tricia Geno, a volunteer for the picnic, said, "The whole thing about Mississippi is that we are friendly and we want to have a good time. Everyone is welcome."

The instant camaraderie made any formal activities unnecessary, except for the traditional seed thumpin' contest and the desert and fried chicken-judging contests. Laid out

Continued



along narrow picnic tables with red and white tablecloths were rows and rows of wings, thighs, legs, and breasts encrusted in homemade batters and breadings. As the judges picked up each piece, one could see Rorschach-type blots absorbed in the paper plates in varying degrees, depending on the type of oil, lard, or fatback used. Next to the disjointed poultry was a table of Southern Confections — banana cream pie, unnaturally red strawberry cake, molasses pie, and a glut of those deliciously caloric pecan pies. At the other end of the meadow was another table, weakening under the weight of potato salads, hush puppies, macaroni salads, cornbread, ham hock, fried catfish, pimienta cheese, butter beans, and all the other fare which makes the southern dining experience a heavy one. As one sampler said, "That plum pudding sure looks good, but it's so heavy ah don't think mah paper plate will hold it." His friend was eyeing the carrot cake to the right with a look of confusion. "Carrot cake? Isn't that Californian?"

The winner of the dessert contest was a very thin woman with enormous pie-plate eyes, named Anie Nunnally. She came to New York from her native Hattiesburg via India, where she spent four years living on an ashram studying meditation. She is a singer and performer who has appeared on Broadway. It seems that many Mississippians fly the coop to pursue careers in the arts. Jim Butler, Director of Alumni Activities at the University of Mississippi, said, "Most of the students who seriously study one of the arts end up in New York. And not just from Mississippi either." He and his wife had flown up from Oxford, Mississippi to check on the progress of Ole Miss alumni. Congressman Sonny Montgomery flew up too. Attached to his large, sturdy frame was a powerful hand, extended to the public for the purpose of shaking. Shawn Weatherby, the current Miss U.S.A., made an appearance as well. Although not from Mississippi, her Southern heritage put her somewhat in cahoots with the real natives, and that Pepsodent smile warmed their hearts at the very least. A man from Jackson approached her from the side, tapped her bannered shoulder and said, "Ya know, ah think ah luuuv you!"



photos by William Lulow



All in all, approximately 600 people turned out for the "Way Up North In Mississippi Picnic" to enjoy an afternoon of sunny, breezy weather, Dixieland music, mountains of food, and that very definite southern hospitality. All the volunteers hope to see the picnic become an annual affair. In spite of the fact that they were not permitted to sell anything or to accept financial contributions, they managed to offer souvenirs: Mississippi balloons, pot holders, key chains and frisbees, and sample packs of cigarettes. But the most popular item was a large, white carry bag with the inscription, "Mississippi — It's Like Coming Home!"

Brett Shapiro has a B.A. degree, with honors in English, at Temple University at Philadelphia, Pa. He now is a freelance writer and resides in New York City.



Marjorie Richardson Bates, Artist: Drawn By The Delta

Editor's Note: Lillian Smith became acquainted with Marjorie Richardson Bates when Marjorie was in her English 301 classes at Delta State University. Mrs. Smith has her students keep daily journals, and this article is based on the information from Mrs. Bates' journal and a series of interviews.



"Because my husband's career was the Air Force, over the last thirty years I've lived in seven states and one foreign country — Germany. I've always tried to create a home for my family wherever we settled and tried to adapt, be content, and find beauty in my environment."

When Marjorie Bates moved to Cleveland following her husband's death in 1979, she set out once more to create a home for herself, but finding beauty in the Delta was no problem. When I entered the foyer of her apartment, I was greeted by the smell of paint and turpentine informing me that Marjorie had a painting in progress. The painting was a Delta landscape.

"I grew up in Delta City and remember the freedom of running the horse across the fields, laughing at the wind in my hair, and coming home with Delta mud on my shoes. I've always associated the freedom I enjoyed as a child with the spirit of the Delta itself. The Delta's landscape is free, natural, and even wild compared to the tame, manicured European landscape. I like weeds and wildflowers. To me, weeds are as beautiful as trees."

Explaining her affinity for the Delta, Marjorie recalled, "Once back in December 1977, after visiting my mother in Anguilla, I was driving back to my home in Laurel, where Bill and I had settled. As I left the Delta and re-entered south Mississippi, all nestled in hills and pines — where I could only guess at the performance of the sky from one minute to the next — for the first time, I recognized that this visit to the Delta had fulfilled a need that I had experienced each December. I longed, as only a Deltan can know and understand, to feel the cold wind rushing past, pushing the rest of the world away so that there is nothing left save this remote corner of civilization. When Bill died, I knew that the only answer for my heavy spirit was to answer this strange longing and return to the Delta."

"Many natives find the Delta's winter landscape monotonous and depressing, but is bare necessarily ugly? One of my favorite artists, Jean Parrish, moved from her home in New England to New Mexico because New England had 'no open vistas and too much fuzzy green covering the structure of the earth and hills.' The Delta is for me what New Mexico is to Jean Parrish and also to Georgia O'Keefe, who sees so much abstract form in the land patterns of the West — it is bare

bones. The winter exposes the essence of the Delta, strips it of all its fancy, frilly spring trappings, and reveals its true colors. The Delta's unobstructed winter sky allows the clouds full play over the earth below. What goes on in the sky determines what happens to the earth's colors.

"Music and painting are interrelated in that they both have rhythm. I find the Delta's landscape dynamic; I want to get caught up in it and enter into its rhythm. My thoughts come so easily when I see a grove of blue and violet pecan trees. I can see patterns of storage bins and sheds silhouetted against the afternoon sun. Every tree seems outlined starkly against the December sky of racing clouds. The endless miles of elongated fingers of cotton rows seem to reach and touch every horizon as if extending into infinity.

"There's a solitude about the Delta's winter landscape. The subtle violets, greens, and browns of the winter landscape cause a peace to come over my soul. The gnawing desolation of the Delta is powerful and beautiful, yet also strange and sorrowful. I have always recognized myself as an observer of rather than a participant in life. My theory is that stimulation comes when we get to know ourselves and spend time alone each day. Solitude begets poetry, music, painting, and writing. Solitude brings renewal, a coming together of self, a time to set new goals."

After a pause, Marjorie continued her reflections. "I think of winter as my husband thought of death — as a new beginning, as a tuning of the instruments for the final performance and as a prelude to a new cycle of life which, like nature, has its cycles. We should enjoy each stage to the hilt and enter into

the next as a challenge. I consider myself in the springtime cycle of my career in art. I am only beginning.

"Pursuing art, like life itself, has been a challenge and has not been without a struggle. But struggling is growing and an artist is a student forever. Painting and writing are similar because both artist and writer are subjectively inspired. The most difficult thing an artist faces is that first inspiration. This stimulus, from real or imagined subject matter, plays a rich role in the birth of a creation. Then a student has to learn to evaluate his ideas in order to organize and manipulate the art elements. The artist spends a lifetime searching for attitudes and responses concerning his art and then adjusting those attitudes and responses. A wealth of material grows within an individual, ripening as the years go by with experience and awareness.

"My direction is a composite not only of my experiences in living but also of all that I have learned from the artists I have studied with and admired." A German artist gave



Marjorie her first formal art instruction. Later she studied at the University of Southern Mississippi. At Delta State Marjorie has gotten back into the discipline of drawing and has become bolder in her color statements. She admires the French and American Impressionists' interpretation of colors as they appear in nature.

"Placing colors side by side on a canvas to present my aesthetic statement must be as difficult as writing poetry. To say what I see with brushes, tubes of paint, and visual perception is what painting is all about."

Like the Impressionists of the nineteenth century, Marjorie likes to paint her landscapes **en plein air**. "Setting up equipment in the field takes perseverance, but if the weather permits, I work the entire painting outdoors for a better chance at capturing the atmospheric condition of the landscape. I try to capture some of the essence of the light-filled clouds building and moving dynamically across the Delta landscape. To convey light and color is where the eternal struggle comes in."

To begin a landscape Marjorie does small oil sketches or colored pencil drawings to state the first color notes and work with the composition. She works on the color masses first, the details later. "I paint on untempered masonite, primed with two coats of gesso because of its strength and low cost."

Marjorie Bates' Delta landscapes are studies of light, atmosphere, and color. The artist enjoys painting in and around Cleveland and finds a different subject in the same spot by viewing it at different times of the day. Right now, she is especially

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THE DUSTER

a story by Joseph Williamson

illustration by Jeff Patch



He stood, half leaned, with his arched back pressing into the indented trunk of the big sycamore.

"J.C.? You hear, boy? Way on out this time. Up, up and away, boy. Like flying, boy!"

He saw the intense, pale figure, hunched between the ropes of the great swing coming at him now with immense speed.

"Look out! You'll hit the tree, boy," and he stepped out to catch him, his foot coming down hard on a spiny sycamore ball and he

pitched forward, spread-eagled, into the cushion of dried leaves and twisted twigs.

"Mother? Is he alright? J.C.?"

He lay still and his eyes flicked side to side, shapes vague, motionless, the leaves at eye-level curling skyward like so many spiraled springs, colors co-mingling in sienna shades and bronze and speckled umbered orange.

"J.C.?" Still no answer.

He remained quiet there for what seemed a long while and focused on

the criss-crossed leaf stems, like staggered distant fence posts.

"Don't move," he said. "They'll think we're dead. When it gets darker, we'll shinney under the barbed wire and get to the trenches." Nothing. "Did you hear me?"

He frowned. "Are you hurt, J.C.? Are you hurt?" He lay and listened to the crackle of leaves. Fall. He was surprised it was Fall. Why was he perspiring so? The pungent sweetness of rotting persimmon

swept past his nostrils and the moldy odor of woods dust and decay. A pea-green lizard peeked out from beneath a leaf canopy, stared in utter astonishment at the huge, revolving eyeballs sweeping back and forth across the ground, blinked and scampered away.

"Just lay still," he said. "The Heinie's will think we're dead. Are you hurt, J.C.? Answer me." Why was J.C. here, anyway? He was too young to be in this place. In a moment, exhausted, he was asleep.

"Roll him over easy," said Mrs. Wykert. "You alright, Mr. Brill? No bones broken, I don't think. Just fell asleep out here, I reckon."

His body was damp and he shivered. Mrs. Wykert, large and over-lapping in her nurse's uniform, and Curtis, muscular-taut under soiled white coat and tight jeans, each slid themselves with ease under an arm of the old man and raised him haltingly to his feet. "You alright, Mr. Brill? Didn't fall, did you? Maybe he fell. Wouldn't have been lying like this if he hadn't fallen, would he? Reckon he did fall, don't you, Curtis?"

"Yes'm. 'Spect he did fall," the orderly muttered.

Confused. Mustn't be confused like this. Why are they lifting me? Got to fight it. His head hung back, jaw slack, so that he stared straight up through the spreading limbs and sparse foliage and the Mississippi Delta sunlight jabbed through like elongated florescent tubes speckled with dancing dust, breaking up now and then and spattering the woods around them with luminous spots that hopped and skipped about like lightning bugs playing hide-and-seek.

In his room now, cubicle really, the aluminum retention sidebars of the bed pulled high around him, his eyes were closed but he was not asleep. He had entwined his weakened body of bones semi-fetal fashion into the stained sheets, swirled around him like some cream-colored umbiliform. Nurse Wykert had called the son and they stood now above the bed. "Really, Mr. Brill, he's giving us a lot of trouble lately. I'm not complaining, you understand, but maybe if you would — well, if you could maybe find the

time to come visit him more often it would keep his mind more active. I mean, we spend as much time with him — with all the patients — as we can, you understand but, well, you can't imagine how it disrupts things when somebody takes more of our time than their share. And, well —"

J.C. was staring down at the wretched form and thinking, well this is the way it is. This is how it all winds up, is it?

"He goes off on these tangents, lately," Nurse Wykert was saying. "Keeps wanting to talk about the war. He's too old to have been in the war, isn't he? I mean, he's about 85 now, isn't he?"

J.C. sighed, took out a cigarette and thought the better of it. "Eighty-six, now, I think. He's talking about the first World War," he answered. "I was in the last one myself." And he thought how stupid that was since he knew nobody, least of all Nurse Wykert, gave a damn whether he was in the Second World War. She was still talking, something about hardening of the arteries and blood flow to the brain, and J.C. turned and strode to the window and looked out across the yard and at the Delta sun hanging low behind the line of mimosas beyond.

Even now, he's still talking about flying and that damn war of his that everybody's forgotten and now, God, how many of them can even be left, he was thinking. He remembered now the times his old man had told him about those early flying days in France. He thought they were just war stories until years later when he came across an old newspaper clipping from the Jackson Leader in a box in the attic which recounted his daddy's escapades. Then he felt guilty for not having believed the stories all those growing-up years.

"I was talking to Dr. Bernero about senility when he was here at the home the other day," Nurse Wykert was saying. J.C. turned back toward the bed. The old form was still wound up there in the stained sheets and J.C. felt guilty again that he didn't really like to look at the elderly man anymore.

"He was talking about an article in the **AMA Journal** which said that really — when you get right down

to it — there's no such thing, strictly speaking, I mean, and that quite often when somebody's mind seems to go off it's often because of reaction to long periods of medication or infection or not enough blood to the brain or something like that. I mean I really didn't understand it all but that's what he was saying or something like that."

He was still staring down at the bed, through it really, and she knew he wasn't altogether listening to her and after she left the room J.C. stood there for several minutes more.

"Oh, we were the wild ones, boy. I tell you. We flew by the seat of our pants in those days." J.C. could hear his daddy telling him the story again, and to see him like this now it was impossible to believe that these dessicated bones could have ever been anything else than what they had become.

"No protection, not even weapons at first. Yes, sir, you couldn't find a stove lid in all of France. All the aviators were sitting on them for armor. To keep from getting shot in the you-know-what!" J.C. had never in all his life heard his daddy curse. Maybe a "damn" once in a while but nothing more.

"I was commissioned a second lieutenant of artillery at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, at first. Your mother and I had only been married a few months. Went over on the ship to Bordeaux and that's when they told us about this new Army Air Corps. It was part of the Signal Corps back then, you know. That's because all they were doing was observing. Didn't have guns at first. Did I tell you that? Well, this buddy of mine and I decided we might as well volunteer. Just for the heck of it, you know? Crazy. You know how it was. Didn't care much about anything in those days. You know how it was.

"Well, I became an observer with the old 99th Aero Squadron. They already had their pilots and what they needed were observers, so we would fly over the German lines and take pictures and report back other things we saw and such as that. Germans were using planes, too, and it was sort of a gentlemanly

thing to stand up there in the cockpit and salute each other as we flew past.

"Now I tell you it turned out those Heinies were no gentlemen because one day this Kraut pulled out a luger and fired at one of our guys and that was the beginning of air warfare — right then and there because the next day this same fellow that got fired at took up a shotgun with him and from then on all kinds of stuff broke loose.

"One thing we'd do, too, was take a case of empty milk bottles up with us — they were made of glass in those days, you know; not these saggy, waxey things — and we'd drop 'em down on those Krauts and they'd whistle like a French-75 shell coming at you. Boy, you could see those Germans scatter!

"Well, anyway, things got more sophisticated when they mounted what they called these twin Lewis machine guns on the planes and which were somehow synchronized to fire through the props."

His daddy would usually pause here and sort of shake his head and smile a little as if he were enjoying the telling of it for the first time.

"Told you about getting shot down by Baron von Richthofen, didn't I?" (God, how many times had he told him!) "It was during the Battle of Chatillon. The Red Baron, they called him. Oh, yes, that's the same Red Baron they talk about in the Snoopy cartoon, you know? That dog always talking about flying his Sopwith Camel against the Red Baron? Well; that was this German ace, von Richthofen, and he had a whole squadron of planes that he led and they were all painted up in bright colors and they called him von Richthofen and his Flying Circus. The sight of that coming at you out of the clouds would scare the pants right off, I tell you!

"That's when it happened to me. The old Red Baron and his boys came at us right out of the sun that day and chased us over half of France before a bullet took off half an aileron and put us down in No-Man's Land — right smack between the Allied and German lines. And there we were. Me, the pilot, and one wheel of that plane all trying to hunch down inside that one shell hole. I tell you, it was something else, boy."

He would shake his head again and half smile at J.C. to let the drama of the moment sink all the way in.

"I remember it was late afternoon, April I think it was. I can tell you I didn't plan to stay out there all night. There was this dugout we spotted not more than twenty-five yards off to our left and I told my pilot that's where I was heading soon as it got dark. Well, sir, he wasn't so sure that was the thing to do because we didn't know whether there were Krauts, Americans, French, Turks or just anybody in there. Anyway, soon as dark came, I crawled over there on my belly and shoved open the little door and rolled inside, all the time not knowing what to expect. All I knew was that I didn't plan to spend the night out there in that shell hole because the Krauts and the Doughboys like to set up some chatter at night with their machine guns just to pass the long hours.

"Don't imagine they did that sort of thing in your war, son. Different kind of war altogether. Yes, sir, all night long they'd play tunes on those guns from the trenches — bomp-bomp-bomp! That would be the doughboys. And chat-chat-chat! That would be some Kraut answering them. Bomp-bomp! Chat-chat! Bomp-bomp-bomp! Chat-chat-chat! Bomp! Chat! Bomp-

didi-bomp! Chat-didi-chat! Like that. You got to remember we were right out there in the middle of that crossfire and I didn't want any part of it, believe me.

"Well, sir, we hunched down in that black hole all night — the pilot finally got lonesome and crawled on over to the dugout, too — and we stayed there all night listening to those guns and all the other sounds outside not knowing what was going on and it was just about day-break when somebody stuck their face down into that hole and it was the biggest, dirtiest, red French beard I ever saw. I've always liked red beards since then."

He would stroke his face then. "Grew a red mustache myself after that but when I came home from France and your mother met me at the docks in New York, well she made me shave it off before we headed home to Mississippi."

The old man stirred and J.C. was thinking now that maybe he should leave and let him get some rest and he was thinking, too, as he pulled his Camaro out of the parking lot and headed back toward town that, well, he had done one thing in his life to please his daddy and that was becoming a flyer. He had gone into the Air Corps out of the V-5 program from Ole Miss in 1942, and when he came home his daddy had asked him all about it, about the P-38 he flew as escort to the B-17's on the bombing runs over Bizert but then it always came back to the old man's own war and. . . "I know I've told you about the time we went down in no-man's land. . ."

J.C. had tried several things when he got home and once thought he might like getting on with the airlines. But then he started helping out a buddy who was trying to get going with an agricultural flying service. Looking back now it was

almost impossible to believe, at 54, he was still dusting crops. "It's a helluva way to make a living," he often told himself over those years, especially these later years, but he had his own ag service for the past twenty of them now and he had done pretty good for himself. He had been at the right place at the right time, when the chemical revolution hit farming in the early 50's, and J.C. had been there on the ground floor. But it was still a helluva way to make a living, he kept telling himself.

Not so for the old man. He had been tickled pink about it and every spring he used to come out and watch J.C. dusting a field somewhere around Catalpa County and later tell him how the bi-plane reminded him of how it was when he was flying in France back in seventeen and eighteen.

He was thirsty.

He came in tight over the tops of dust-drenched willows hanging heavy like flour-coated spectres along the crusted creek bed, nostrils seared from the mist of methyl parathion laying thick in the cockpit, the skin at the top of his throat sticking to base of his tongue.

He swallowed with difficulty.

This was his twelfth run. Thirteenth? J.C. was really not with it and this was not good and he knew that. Nervously now he fingered the prop control lever and pushed forward on the stick, the snubby Ag Cat dropping impatiently like a jay-hawk to a racing rabbit, easing back just inches above the evenly spaced skip-rows, simultaneously jamming forward on the spray release lever, the plane skimming across the flat Delta field, white bolls of cotton in an incohesive pattern along the periphery of the canopy. He sensed

for a second the refracted apparition-like sensation of cumulous clouds racing past at high altitude.

He was no more than eight feet from earth.

It was hot as only the Mississippi Delta can be hot in mid-September. Probably a hundred degrees, J.C. thought. Probably more, he figured again, a trail of salty water escaping from under his sweat-stained John Deere cap, cascading down his forehead to be trapped in the pocket of his left eye; hands too busy at the controls to brush it away and he blinked furiously three or four times and cursed audibly.

At the field's far side, telephone wires were coming up fast now and he cut the spray lever. Suddenly, he sucked the stick all the way back and rammed throttle full forward, pushing the big gray and yellow craft up and over at just the right instant, engine screaming as it strained skyward into the blistering orange-red fire of late afternoon sun.

"Hammerhead! Hammerhead! Hammerhead!" he shouted aloud and viciously kicked rudder just before the stall. Like an astonished bird impaled in mid-flight the fat, crusty plane slammed to a halt, shuddering there, then plummeted sharply off to the right toward the ground racing up to meet it. J.C. quickly shifted weight, giving hard left rudder, pushing forward on stick and throttle; the craft twisting, then groaning, leveling out. Responding angrily to more throttle, the Ag Cat shot back across the field from where it had come seconds before, as if propelled by some mammoth sling stretched between two of the naked telephone poles.

"Stupid! Stupid!" J.C. shouted, half grinning at the sensuous-cold

sweat sweeping down now through his body. "Stupid-hammerhead-stupidhammerhead!" he hollered, as if it were a single extended invective. It was stupid and he knew it and he could not really explain himself. It was as if some unknown thing had invaded the cockpit, wrestled control, forced him into chilling maneuver against all his senses. J.C. knew of too many ag pilots who had bought it with a hammerhead. He knew better. It was a matter of cutting time, not making full circle to reverse direction of the craft. It was Russian roulette.

"Stupid," he repeated, this time more calmly. He couldn't explain himself at all. The heat, maybe, he told himself. But, whatever, he knew it was time to hang it up for the day. As he approached the end of the run, he rolled her up slowly over the trees and pulled a long, lazy turn in direction of home base.

By the time he taxied to the small, metal hanger, he was wet clear through from the neck down to the backs of his knees. He chocked the wheels and strode lead-like across the hot, hard dirt to his trailer office, sopping his head with his folded cap which he stuffed into his back pocket.

Inside, the cold air penetrated his soaked shirt and jeans. He shivered. "When did that load of paraquat get here?" he asked the young man sprawled back in the chair behind the desk.

"Hey, Mr. Brill. How'd it go up there?" the young man grinned from behind a copy of Hot Rod.

"When did that load of paraquat get here?" J.C. repeated and backed up to the air conditioning unit in the window.

"About an hour ago," the young man said. J.C. went across to the small sink at the far end of the

room, slapped water on his face and rinsed his hands which he dried in his arm pits and on the front of his shirt.

"You going to let it sit out there all night?" J.C. reached for a cigarette in his shirt pocket and wished he had a cold beer.

The young man unraveled slowly. "No, sir. I was going to get to it when it cooled off a bit."

J.C. stared across at him. "It's not going to get any cooler," he snapped. "But it's going to get dark. Get it under lock and key before you leave. That stuff's worth a bundle now."

The young man laid down the magazine and walked weightlessly to the door, bony pink-pale face unsmiling now, bobbing like a loose globe atop his disjointed, extended frame poked haphazardly inside ballooning and faded green coveralls. J.C. was wondering whether he should fire the boy tomorrow as he strode across to the desk and reviewed his schedule on the clip board hanging from the wall. He was very tired, reaching to hang the clipboard back on the nail; leaning back interrogating the

elongated cubicle around him, the soiled protrusion of dull tile that was the sink next to the denuded table save for its over-sized and garish Chinese-red lamp. The room was divided unevenly by its dessicated and faded rust-colored velveteen curtain; the odor as from an unwashed pair of wool pants; beyond, unseen, the cramped kitchen and prefab bath stall.

He ran his tongue over the film of dust on his teeth and then went to the shower and let the needles beat down on the back of his red neck for a good while and thought about having to pull maintenance on the Cat. Well, it was Friday night and he'd think on that tomorrow. He really should go out to the home and see the old man tonight but, God, he hated it. And it made him feel guilty all over again, but then it was the truth that the old man probably wouldn't even know he was there. It had been almost a week now and Nurse Wykert had told him he ought to just come by and sit with him and hold his hand and even though the old man might not seem like he was aware, that just maybe touching somehow got

through to him and talking to him a little certainly couldn't hurt anything. "You really never know about some of these people," she said. "We think a lot of times they really are aware but just can't respond — it's because of deterioration of the central system is what Dr. Bernero said — so we think it's still better to try to communicate whether you really get through to them or not. You just really never know but it's better than nothing. I'm not fussin' at you, Mr. Brill. You know that. Not my place to do that. But I think it just might help a little, you know?"

Well, it was Friday and J.C. told himself that he had been hitting it pretty hard all week and, well, he deserved a little R and R and maybe he could go out to the home Sunday afternoon and, hell, the home was taking real good care of the old fellow and with what he paid them and what Medicare paid them they sure ought to be taking real good care of him. And that's really about all you can do when they get like that, he told himself. Make 'em comfortable. It's a shame but that's really about all you can do.

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He pulled on trousers and sport shirt and went out and turned on the outside lights before locking the door. When he reached the highway, he hesitated for an instant not really aware of it, then turned his car in the direction of the VFW Club out toward Five Points. Being Friday, he figured Jack Crenshaw and Buddy Bishop would probably be there arguing about how much better their Commanders were than Ag Cats, and if they got half-bombed they'd wind up telling the whole damn clubroom about the time J.C. screwed up and sprayed old man Boatwright's soybeans with 2, 4, 5-T. They never got tired of riding J.C. about that one.

"They're a real pair of clowns," J.C. was telling himself, and he was half-grinning as he switched on the car radio. And old Frank Hood would sooner or later get around to telling about the flame-out he had on his jet in Korea and what happened to him for three days out there in the boonies with that mamma-san looking after him. And the story got bigger every time J.C. heard it. "Now Frank. There was a real yo-yo!"

The club seemed to be changing somehow, though. Lot of new blood around lately, like that buck — J.C. couldn't remember his name — talking about the maneuverability of the Huey he flew in Nam and how maybe choppers could do a better job in flying on pesticides and how some guy up in Tunica County was already using one.

J.C.'s back muscles were drawn up and aching some from being in the cockpit all day and he twisted a little in the seat trying to take off the pressure. He looked up into the rear-view mirror and ran his fingers through his hair and found it was still a little damp at the back of the neck from his shower. "Gettin' old, gettin' old, you old flying duster bastard," he said without sound.

But a couple or three Jack Daniels' and water and a few laughs with those jocks would help to ease it up.

Joseph Williamson is the Managing Editor of the Farm Press Publications in Clarksdale, MS. He has a B.A. degree in English from Memphis State University.

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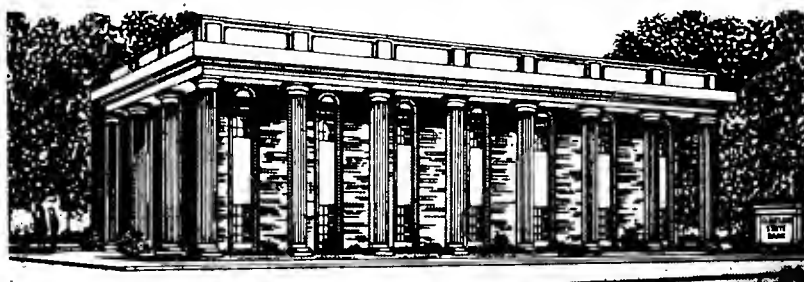
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Golden Gloves Continued from page 12

now wears the mantle of leadership as club president and northern district AAU director for boxing. Involved with Golden Gloves since he was 14 years old, Murry Roark fought in the 1961 Golden Gloves national finals. "I think it broadened my knowledge a whole lot," he says. "Like most of these boys here, I hadn't ever traveled any farther than Memphis." With more than 100 fights to his credit, Roark appeared on television and fought in New York, Chicago, and Ohio.

"It's a new experience for a lot of these boys," says Roark of his fighters. "They get an opportunity to travel, stay in motels, even taste foods that are totally new to them." He recounts one young boxer's first experience with fried shrimp and his delight in the discovered dish.

"Most important," says Roark, "you'd be amazed at how much self-discipline the boys develop through boxing. And it keeps them out of street fights. After they've been in the ring, street fighting is no challenge anymore."

"I couldn't say I do it strictly to help the boys," admits Roark, who is also involved in promoting Junior Olympic competition. "I do it because I like it."

That love of the fight game is generational in the Roark home where 14-year-old Al, a past state champion, trains to fight in the bantam-weight division. From father to son, the tradition of Golden Gloves has become a hallmark in the annals of Delta sportsmen.

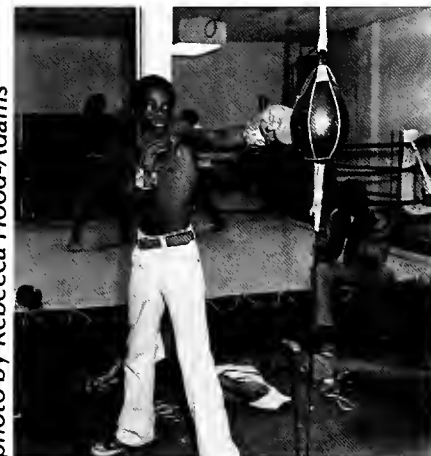


photo by Rebecca Hood-Adams

Lorenzo, 14, son of Annie White of Cleveland, works out on the both-ends bag.

Waiting for Yesterday Continued from page 13

truck provides him with memories of a time that still lingers around Beulah but seems to dissipate more with each succeeding year.

"Yep," Fish would often say through tobacco-stained teeth, "thangs she ain't what they uster be. Was a time when this old truck uster be the shiningest thang you ever would see. Me and the old lady uster roll down them dirt roads so fast yo haid'd swim."

A tinge of longing would flash across those age-dimmed eyes at times when he spoke of the past, but this would quickly be ushered out by his growing passion as he related the rest of his story.

"Remember like yesterday when the Murphy's house caught fire and we barely saved it — now that was close!" he'd say with a flourish of his pork pie hat.

Then the longing would reappear and Fish would become more philosophical.

"Da times just left me and the lady," he'd say. "We just couldn't run fast enough. Everything just got so cotton pickin' complicated and I'll be darned if the right way weren't always the best way. Yep, thangs, she have done changed."

With that he'd go back to polishing the chrome while cars on the highway would zip through town as if they were on their way to a fire.

I suppose Fish and his old girl are really the guiding spirits of Beulah. Both tried to delay time but were caught in its vacuum and unwillingly dragged along, despite their attempts to break free. Both are now shrines/monuments to the part of man that wants to hold back the clock and yet remain in touch with today. But today has exacted a heavy toll from men like Fish, classics like the '39 fire truck, and towns like Beulah.

CORRECTION

The story "The Link", which appeared in our Fall, 1980 issue, inadvertently gave credit to the Texas Gas Transmission Company for taking over the debts of the bridge spanning the Mississippi at Greenville. Actually, it was the Tennessee Pipeline Company. We regret the error.

photo by Jody Corro



Author Larry Conway (left) and Albert Turner, both of Beulah, check fire hose on old cart.



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Poor Nigger's Mansion (Winstonville, Mississippi 1980)

by Gary Cage

A shack
In the middle of a cotton field,
Lonely in the cool of an April
afternoon.
An old, rusted Chevrolet
Symbol
of better days — long past.
Cold, broken steps scream at the
Touch of a stranger's feet.
The odor of urine signals
the presence of life.
A screen door (without a screen)
Opens to the mind a deep, black
abyss.
Flies
feasting on the nipple of a
bottle,
The vultures of a baby's cradle.
Twelve haunting eyes,
Six hungry children,
Wondering about the silent
intruder.
A suspicious father,
Angry,
Proud,
And yet — ashamed of the four
Rotten walls he must call home.
Bloodshot, piercing eyes follow
As I venture from room to room.
Who is the solemn stranger?
A social worker who has come
for the
Third time this week
To
count the children.
A vote seeker who has come to
explain
Why
a poor black man should vote.
A woodstove kitchen,
An ever-smiling mother,
Eagerly offering food
that she does not have.
Pride?
I hold my breath (not from the
stench)
To keep
my mouth from screaming
What my heart feels.
I must escape
to hid myself
From Ham's cursed children.
I must escape
and ask. Where?
Where are the social workers,
The politicians, the gods?

Gary Cage lives in Vicksburg and is a student at Delta State University majoring in English.

Lines For Mrs. Maude Collins On Her One Hundredth Birthday

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

Clock quit keepin' time
I don't know when;
Jesus knows I'm ready,
He's measured out my hours;
I just lays here,
My eyes full of pictures,
Old days dance
Like a parade across the room.

Daddy pulls me to his lap,
I smell safe field dust on his shirt;
Brother takes me by the hand
And leads me to that water
Where the preacher waits;
Licked clean like the calf
I rise up and all the sisters shout.
Cousin Virgie at the door,
Says mob done killed my husband,
Children hangin' on my skirt
And I've no words to tell them.
Drought dries up the crops
And hunger sets down at my table;
Legs give way, then fingers stiff,
I cannot thread the needle.

It's all one
And just the same to me;
Don't need no calendar
To mark my memories;
Live long enough,
Newspaper sends out
Some white lady
Always asking why;
I smile when she
Wants to wind the clock.

Rebecca Hood-Adams received her Master's degree in English from Delta State University and her B.A. in journalism from Memphis State University. She is head resident of a women's dorm at DSU. Poems by Adams will be included in Mississippi Writers: Reflections of Childhood and Youth, an anthology to be released this fall by the University Press of Mississippi.

A Special Place

by Alison Britt

My father's studio is my favorite place to be. It is an old shack located in the country that he rebuilt to use as his art studio.

From an outside view of the studio there are four main walls made of cypress. It has a porch in the front with stairs leading to it. The porch has columns with flowering vines draping from them. In the top corner of each column is a decorative carving which my father designed. The southwest side of the shack has three windows, through which the late afternoon sun shines causing shadows to fall perfectly over the room inside. The roof is covered with tin which takes on a magical appearance when the sun begins to set. The atmosphere around the studio is one of beauty and peace. There are flowers, plants, and trees growing around the studio which enhance the overall beauty.

This place of my father I also call my own. It is the perfect place for me to enjoy being alone. It is a

place for me to solve or forget the problems that seem to overwhelm me. I find it so easy to let my thoughts run wild and be anything I dare to dream of being. I can shout, cry, smile, and even laugh out loud without anyone even knowing. There is no more need to pretend here.

There are so many memories of times spent in this place: memories of long, hard days as Daddy worked at the seemingly impossible task of turning his dream studio into reality. I can see his love, strength, and gentleness in each carefully secured board, in the tin roof he spent hours nailing down, in the plants that he tenderly cared for, and in the tree house he built especially for my brothers and me. There are memories of family picnics, of playing knee football and kickball, of special talks and times with family and friends, of cook-outs, of working in the garden, and even of mowing the grass.

To anyone else this place may still be just an old shack, but for me it is much more. It is a symbol of my father's love, strength, and gentleness. It is a place where many fond memories were made, a place where I feel the closest to God, a place where I'm filled with a new peace and a renewed spirit. It is here that I come to find myself once more.

Alison Britt is a freshman at Delta State University and the daughter of Sammy Britt, a member of the university's art department staff.

Do You Remember The Peabody?



Are you one of the many Deltans who fell in love on the dance floor of the Hotel Peabody as the orchestra played wistful melodies and the scent of your gardenia wrist corsage perfumed the air? Did your shopping trips to Memphis always include lunch at the Peabody, where the service was elegant and the food designed to appeal to ladies' palates? Did you meet a soldier in the lobby during the war, and together watch the procession of famed Peabody ducks march across the carpet? Perhaps you spent your honeymoon there, or got slicked-up for a night on the town in the Peabody's barber shop.

We're looking for memories from readers who believe in the saying that "the Delta begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel." When the Peabody re-opens this summer, writer Rebecca Hood-Adams will be there to capture the magic of the grand dame of Southern hotels. Future issues of **Delta Scene** will bring you an inside glimpse of the resurrection of the Peabody.

Won't you take time to share with us your memories of special days at the Peabody? Please address your letters to Rebecca Hood-Adams, **Delta Scene**, P.O. Box B-3, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733. Be sure and tell us if we may include your name in our story, and if possible, include a phone number where you could be reached for additional details.

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photo by Sammy Britt



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**Drawn by the Delta
Continued from page 19**

interested in morning scenes. "To view the countryside around Cleveland at the most exciting time of the day means going outdoors early in the morning. The distant trees have that violet, hazy blue atmosphere that only mist rising from the earth can create."

"I like riding along a quiet country road in the early morning with the car windows open. I slow down to ingest a particular eye-catching scene, and suddenly the quiet country is teeming with earth and people sounds. Birds, busy with their morning feeding in the fields, seem to be having an exciting party. The soft, grey doves coo softly while the blue jay chastises a greedy, shiny black crow. From across the bayou, I can hear a horse neigh as his owner rattles the latch on the gate. To experience the earth coming alive with morning sounds enriches my day."

Painting the Delta inspires Marjorie, who believes that there has not been enough concentration on the Delta. "The Delta has universal appeal; it is as powerful as either the mountains or the ocean, both of which seem to humble us and give our lives a new perspective. Life has its disappointments, but it also has its dreams — working in an art-related field after my graduation in May is my dream. I always want to have time for drawing and painting."

Some of Marjorie Bates' paintings have been and are being displayed on the D.S.U. campus at Wright Art Center. The Art Students' Exhibition was February 2 through February 27, 1981, and the Senior Thesis Exhibition will be April 18 through May 3, 1981. The artist has said that she is only beginning. With her ability and the Delta's dynamic rhythm to stimulate her, I expect to see more of Marjorie Richardson Bates' art work.

Lillian Smith is a resident of Cleveland, Mississippi, and is a member of the English faculty at Delta State University.

A cartoon illustration of a lion with a friendly expression, wearing a suit and tie, and holding a briefcase in its right hand.

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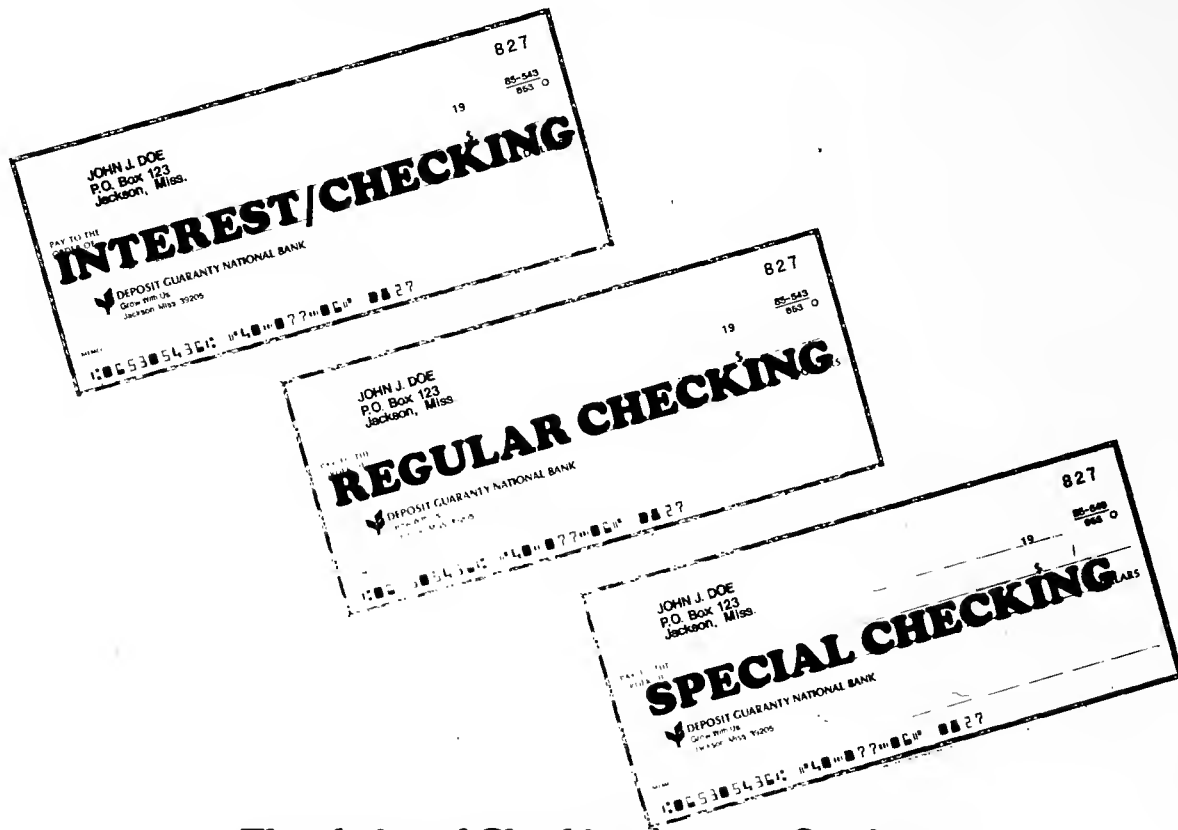
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